

Inventors and Scientists: Neil deGrasse Tyson

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Astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson attends a special screening of "The Martian" during the New York Film Festival on Sunday, Sept. 27, 2015, in New York. Photo: Evan Agostini/Invision/AP

Synopsis: Neil deGrasse Tyson is a well-known scientist. He was born and raised in New York City. He discovered his love for the stars at an early age. He went to Harvard to study physics and got his doctorate degree at Columbia University. Tyson went to work for the Hayden Planetarium in 1996. Today, he is in charge of the planetarium. Tyson talks about science on TV. He is one of the few African-Americans in his field.

Early Life

Neil deGrasse Tyson is one of America's best-known scientists. He has great knowledge of the stars and planets. He is very good at explaining complicated ideas.

Tyson grew up in New York City. When he was 9, he went to the Hayden Planetarium at the Museum of Natural History. That is where he became interested in the stars. Tyson later took classes at the planetarium. As a teenager, he got his own telescope. He watched the skies from the roof of his apartment building.

Tyson was a very good student. He graduated from the Bronx High School of Science in 1976. He went to college at Harvard University and studied physics. He earned a doctorate degree from Columbia University in 1991. Later, he got a job at the Hayden Planetarium.

Career Highlights

Tyson was promoted to be in charge of the planetarium. He did something many people disagreed with. Tyson removed Pluto from the models of planets in the planetarium. Pluto had always been called a planet. Tyson said it was really a dwarf planet. Pluto moves around the sun as regular planets do. Yet Pluto does not have as much gravity. It cannot push other objects away. Because of this, Tyson said Pluto was not a regular planet. Many people were upset and disagreed with him. The International Astronomical Union agreed with Tyson in 2006. They officially labeled Pluto as a dwarf planet.

Tyson talks about science on TV. He is known for his sense of humor. He has appeared on "The Colbert Report" and "The Daily Show."

In 2014, Tyson hosted a TV show called "COSMOS: A Space-Time Odyssey."

Personal Life

Tyson lives in New York City with his wife and their two children. He enjoys collecting writing tools.

Quiz

- 1 Which question is answered in the first paragraph of the section "Career Highlights"?
 - (A) How did Tyson get his job at the planetarium?
 - (B) Why did Tyson decide that Pluto didn't belong in models of planets?
 - (C) What is the International Astronomical Union?
 - (D) What subjects did Tyson study in school?

- 2 Which paragraph from the section "Early Life" explains how Tyson became interested in studying space?

- 3 Which sentence best states a main idea of the entire article?

- 4 What is the main idea of the last paragraph in the section "Early Life"?
 - (A) Tyson studied physics at Columbia University.
 - (B) Tyson is well educated.
 - (C) Tyson attended Harvard University.
 - (D) Tyson graduated from high school in 1976.

Answer Key

- 1 Which question is answered in the first paragraph of the section "Career Highlights"?
- (A) How did Tyson get his job at the planetarium?
- (B) Why did Tyson decide that Pluto didn't belong in models of planets?**
- (C) What is the International Astronomical Union?
- (D) What subjects did Tyson study in school?

- 2 Which paragraph from the section "Early Life" explains how Tyson became interested in studying space?

Paragraph 2:

Tyson grew up in New York City. When he was 9, he went to the Hayden Planetarium at the Museum of Natural History. That is where he became interested in the stars. Tyson later took classes at the planetarium. As a teenager, he got his own telescope. He watched the skies from the roof of his apartment building.

- 3 Which sentence best states a main idea of the entire article?
- 4 What is the main idea of the last paragraph in the section "Early Life"?
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- (B) Tyson is well educated.**
- (C) Tyson attended Harvard University.
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